

Guidelines for Activities for Children in Foster Care

Most guardianships allow a guardian to make decisions regarding social and extracurricular activities and may allow the guardian to sign as a parent. Please consult your guardianship court order with questions.

| Activity | Foster Parent Responsibility | Agency Approval | Parents |
|--|--|---|--|
| Family Recreation | Foster parents may decide whether children in their care can participate in every day family activities, such as movies, fairs, community events, YMCA, picnics, in-state camping trips, school field trips. Appropriate supervision must be ensured and these activities should not interfere with parental visitations. | Activities supervised by someone other than the foster parent or activities that keep the child away from home for more than 72 hours, such as a family camping trip, need approval from the social worker. Special activities can receive ongoing written approval as part of the child's case plan. (See, Who Can Watch My Foster Child, below) | As a courtesy, parents should be informed of such activities. |
| Spending The Night | Foster parents have the responsibility to ensure that individuals providing substitute care are mature and safe. Foster parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Must meet the adult who will be supervising prior to allowing the child to spend the night.■ Must ensure there will be adult supervision at all times.■ Must ensure the child has a safety plan and knows how to contact the foster parent in an emergency or if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe.■ May authorize an overnight for one night only.■ Must contact and have prior approval from the social worker for all overnights that exceed one night. The social worker will need to obtain a criminal history background clearance. | Social Worker and foster parent should discuss at the time of placement. For legally free and/or dependent children, social worker may authorize foster parent to allow overnight visits using Who Can Watch My Foster Child guidelines. Social worker will need to approve and obtain a criminal history background clearance for overnights that exceed one night. | Parents must consent for shelter care, voluntary & BECCA children. |
| Who Can Watch My Foster Child When I am Away From Home | <p>Foster children must be cared for in their own foster home by a person over the age of 18 with an acceptable criminal history check (within the past year), or in the home of another childcare or foster care provider except as noted below.</p> <p>Foster parents should be familiar and comfortable with any substitute caregivers. They must meet with substitute caregivers and review DSHS expectations regarding supervision and discipline of foster children. Foster parents are responsible to provide the substitute caregiver with special care instructions regarding any special needs of the foster child. The foster parent must ensure the child has a safety plan and knows how to contact the foster parent in an emergency or if he or she feels uncomfortable or unsafe.</p> <p>If a foster parent feels an older child has the maturity to be left alone for a reasonable period of time, the foster parent must obtain the approval and agreement of the social worker to leave the foster child alone for that period of time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ For short term care of less than 24 hours the foster parent may use neighbor/friend/relative/church nursery without verifying criminal history.■ Foster Parent must meet the individual who will be supervising prior to leaving the child with someone else.■ Foster Parent must ensure there will be adult supervision at all times (except for 16-18 year old babysitters - see below).■ A youth aged 16 or older who is the foster parent's child or who is a relative or neighbor whom the foster parent knows to be of sufficient reliability and maturity may baby sit foster children. The length of babysitting time depends on the maturity and needs of the foster child and the maturity of the babysitter.■ Case aides funded as part of a child's treatment plan are <u>NOT</u> to be used to baby sit/supervise additional children. Case aides are treatment aids. <p>Guidelines for care by 16-18 year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ An acceptable criminal history check (within the past year).■ If the babysitting is a regular arrangement, the foster parents will obtain approval in writing for the arrangement terms from the child's social worker.■ Babysitting by 16-18 year olds will not include more than three children.■ Foster children assessed as level 3 or level 4 on the rate structure assessment may not baby sit other children without prior written approval of the social worker.■ A procedure for an established outside time limit will be developed that would require that the babysitter contact the foster parent and the foster parent is to check in with babysitter on an established periodic basis.■ Sexually Aggressive Youth (SAY) may not baby sit. | Payment of DSHS funds for all childcare and respite care need the prior approval of the social worker. | |

This information is intended to serve as a guide for foster parents when making decisions for children placed in foster care who are in the legal custody of the Department of Social and Health Services, when those children are placed in foster care. For Indian children, contact the child's tribe. The guidelines for activities are only guidelines and should be used to define the parameters of safety. These guidelines are not a recommendation, or a determination of safe practice, for all children, under all circumstances. The guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the foster parents' best judgment, based on an understanding of the individual child and the facts in each case. The safety of foster children is of paramount importance. If a foster parent has concerns about a child's safety or about the application of these guidelines to a particular child in a particular instance, the foster parent should contact the child's social worker for assistance.

| Guidelines for Activities for Children in Foster Care | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| Activity | Foster Parent Responsibility | Agency Approval | Parents |
| Vacation Travel | | <p>Prior approval is necessary for compliance with regional out-of-state travel policy.</p> <p>Frequent or common travel out of state, of one day or less, may be written in the case plan and be approved by the court.</p> | <p>Parents approval is necessary if the child is in a voluntary placement, shelter care status or BECCA child.</p> <p>Minimally, parents must be notified when their child will be traveling out of state.</p> |
| Sport Activities | <p>When participating in sports activities that include but are not limited to: skiing, boating, horseback riding, rollerblading, skateboarding, bike riding, trampoline, and swimming, foster children must be instructed how to use and required to use appropriate safety equipment, such as helmets and life vests.</p> <p>Foster parents should never sign as parent in giving permission for a child to participate in sports activities. They should contact the children's social worker.</p> <p>Children must be in continuous visual or auditory range at all times when they engage in these activities. Foster parents must ensure appropriate supervision of any child that is involved in these activities.</p> | <p>Social worker must approve and parental consent is required for high risk sports such as skydiving, parasailing and paragliding, scuba diving, flying planes/ultra lights.</p> <p>Court order may be necessary for certain high risk activities.</p> | <p>Parent must consent if child is in a voluntary placement, shelter care status or a BECCA child.</p> |
| Motorized Activities | <p>Any motorized activity, including three-wheeling, mowing lawns or snowmobiling, places children at high risk and needs to be approved by the social worker.</p> <p>Children must be in continuous visual or auditory range and be appropriately supervised while engaging in these activities.</p> <p>Children under 14 should not be permitted to mow lawns and children over 14 should be mature enough and have instructions before operating mowers.</p> <p>Safety practices such as wearing helmets, life vests, and other protective gear, should be followed. If the family participates in boating activities , they are to follow Coast Guard regulations such as wearing an approved life vest.</p> | <p>Approval of the social worker is necessary and, in some instances, a court order may be required.</p> | <p>Parent should be notified if child is a dependent, but must consent if child is in a voluntary placement, shelter care or BECCA child.</p> |
| School Sports And Field Trips | <p>Foster children may participate in sports activities or field trips such as baseball, football, soccer, swimming team, T-ball, classroom field trips. These activities are to be sponsored and supervised by a school, church or youth organization.</p> | <p>Social worker must approve any sports activities or field trips that are considered high risk and/or dangerous..</p> <p>May be written into supervision plan at the time of placement.</p> | <p>Parents must give consent if child is on a voluntary placement, shelter care or BECCA child.</p> |
| Driving | <p>If approval is given, the foster parent must provide and pay for insurance for the child driving and agree to maintain insurance and pay for insurance until child reaches 18 or another responsible adult assumes financial liability risks for the child. The foster parent must agree to act as the “parent/guardian” for the purposes of the Intermediate Driver's License Law.</p> | <p>Social worker approval is needed for legally-free children, while parents and/or court must consent for non legally free children.</p> | <p>Parents must consent for voluntary shelter care and BECCA youth. Parents must sign the application with the Dept. of Licensing.</p> |
| Child's Appearance | <p>Significant changes in a child's appearance should not be made without the consultation of the social worker and the parent. These changes include, but are not limited to: body piercing and/or major changes in hairstyle or color.</p> | <p>Social worker approval is necessary for legally free children, while parental consent is necessary for non-legally free children.</p> <p>Native American children need Tribal approval, particularly regarding haircuts.</p> | <p>Parent must consent for non-legally free children.</p> |
| Employment Activities | <p>It may be appropriate for some children to have jobs. The foster parents children and social workers should consult on this and ensure that minor work laws are adhered to. Also the work must not interfere with school.</p> | <p>Social workers need to approve work activity in consultation with a Federal Funding specialist to determine how much money the child may earn and/or save before earnings have to be considered as income available to meet a child's needs.</p> | <p>Parent may be consulted if child is in a dependency. Parent must be consulted if child is in a voluntary placement or BECCA child.</p> |